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CC PS/SOS (B&L)-M
 PS/Mr Scott (B&L)-M
 PS/PUS (B&L)-M
 PS/Sir Ewart Bell
 Mr Bourn
 Mr Brennan-M
 Mr Angel - M
 Mr Merifield
 Mr Gilliland
 Mr Doyne-Ditmas
 Mr Palmer
 Mr Coulson
 Mr Boys Smith-M

① Sir Ewart Bell
 22/11
 ② POL

Mr Buxton

SECRETARY OF STATE'S MEETING WITH THE CHIEF CONSTABLE AND THE GOC

The Secretary of State met the Chief Constable and the GOC in Stormont Castle on 21 November to brief himself on security force deployments following the Darkley shootings on 20 November. Mr Scott accompanied the Secretary of State. Lt Colonel Williams, MA to the GOC, was present, as were Mr Bourn, Mr Merifield, Mr Gilliland, you and myself.

The Chief Constable said that there had been a high state of alert in the RUC for some weeks. But the Darkley shooting was totally unexpected. He had no previous knowledge of that or any other premeditated attack. There had been an attempted assassination of a Roman Catholic in Belfast before the incident and the Assistant Chief Constable for the area had therefore issued a notice in his area warning of sectarian attacks, including ones at churches. But there was no substance in Dr Paisley's allegations of forewarning. The RUC's operations were being structured to meet the present situation. There was a higher profile and the necessary resources were being fully deployed. The situation would remain tense, particularly over the coming weekend. It was important to ensure that the situation in Armagh was kept under control. It was equally important to maintain control in Belfast and Londonderry to avoid riots and sectarian confrontations. But there remained the fear of tit-for-tat killings in isolated areas. These were difficult to prevent or predict. Indeed, South Armagh had been stabilised by recent changes in the command structure. A further Assistant Chief Constable had been made available to provide 24-hour cover at that level. There was no question of the response being affected by overtime restrictions. He hoped in due course to be able to identify those officers who were passing on such allegations to the political parties and take appropriate action against them.

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The Chief Constable said that the Darkley shootings had all the hallmarks of Dominic McGlinchey. INLA had been stung by the charging of two women for the Ballykelly bomb and by the shooting of Carroll. He was considering whether he was satisfied with the efforts of the Garda to apprehend terrorists and to prevent them crossing the border. In this context, he was seeking an early meeting of the JCC, and was assessing the effectiveness of relations between the Garda and the RUC at Local Chief Superintendent level. He would receive a report on this in a few days. If the situation was not satisfactory, he would want to consider whether to recommend further road closures in the area.

The GOC said that the UDR stationed in Keady had coincidentally been patrolling in the area where the shooting took place on 20 November. He had since raised the profile of the forces under his command to provide reassurance and an element of deterrence. He had confirmed that the Spearhead Battalion was in a state of readiness, although he did not judge that it was yet required. A great deal of covert work was continuing, including SAS involvement. In view of the other problems, he hoped it would be possible to keep the situation in the prisons under control without the need to call in the security forces.

The Secretary of State, concluding the discussion, said that he was content that the Chief Constable and the GOC should raise the profile of the security forces for the time being. When he had seen Dr Paisley earlier in the day, Dr Paisley had specifically asked that special security arrangements should be considered for the seven Protestant churches in the South Armagh area. He had undertaken to draw this to the attention of the Chief Constable and the GOC, and he would be grateful if they would do what they could to provide a measure of reassurance for these congregations. He agreed with the Chief Constable, however, that it would be unwise to over-react to the current security situation. He fully accepted that there was no need at this stage to call in the Spearhead Battalion. He believed that more publicity might usefully be given to the quiet continuing work which the RUC carried out at all times to prevent crime. He invited Mr Gilliland to discuss with the RUC the possibility of interesting an appropriate television programme maker in such an idea.

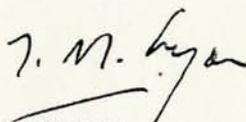
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The Chief Constable said that while he would wish to give this more thought, he was initially sympathetic to the proposal to provide television facilities for a programme on the RUC's preventive work. He noted Dr Paisley's representations. His views on Dr Paisley's wish for a meeting with the Chief Constable were well known, but he had no objections to meetings on the situation in South Armagh with ACC Cushley, the officer responsible for the area.

You may wish to follow up some of the detailed operational points with the Chief Constable in due course, including the links with the Garda. The Secretary of State would be grateful for any further information on the Chief Constable's views when these are available. He would be glad too if Mr Gilliland would follow up the proposed television programme with his contacts in the RUC.



J M LYON
Private Secretary

221 November 1983

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